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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TASHKENT 001989

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [NATO](#) [UZ](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: NATO PURSUING LIMITED REENGAGEMENT WITH UZBEKISTAN

REF: A. 06 TASHKENT 2332

[1](#)B. TASHKENT 989

Classified By: POLOFF STEVEN PROHASKA FOR REASONS 1.4 (B, D)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: NATO Special Representative for the Caucasus and Central Asia Robert Simmons reported that his meetings with Foreign Minister Norov and Defense Minister Mirzayev on November 12 were substantive and he had been well-received. Uzbekistan has resumed participation in Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) activities, is working with NATO's Central Asia Liaison Officer, and wants assistance with the destruction of rocket fuel. Nevertheless, Uzbekistan has refused to participate in a collective group that discusses policy on Afghanistan and has not rejoined NATO's Planning and Review Process. The Defense Minister expressed interest in an expanded number of bilateral agreements. The GOU also is pessimistic about the current situation in Afghanistan. Post supports continued NATO efforts to reengage with Uzbekistan as long as cooperation is a two-way street. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) NATO Special Representative for the Caucasus and Central Asia Robert Simmons visited Tashkent for meetings with GOU officials on November 12. During a debrief for NATO embassies, Simmons said that his visit was well-received and he had substantive discussions with Foreign Minister Norov and Defense Minister Mirzayev. Since his last visit in December (reftel A), NATO's relationship with Uzbekistan has had its ups and downs, he said. Simmons welcomed the resumption of a dialogue with the GOU and was pleased with Uzbekistan's resumption of participation in Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) activities. He was also pleased that the GOU is working with the NATO Central Asia Liaison Officer, Tugay Tuncer. Simmons is trying to get the NATO-Uzbekistan relationship back on track.

[1](#)3. (C) Simmons noted that NATO and Uzbekistan have continued their political dialogue and that this has been working well. NATO's Desk Officer Alexander Vinnikov had had a substantive and positive visit to Tashkent earlier this year. Turning to Afghanistan, Simmons noted that Uzbekistan has good cooperation with Germany, but even Germany cannot move

International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) staff members in and out of Afghanistan using the German airbase at Termez.

Simmons said that NATO has established a special 26 N collective group including the countries of Central Asia to discuss policy on Afghanistan. Uzbekistan was the only Central Asian state which failed to participate in the meeting that took place the preceding week. Foreign Minister Norov indicated to Simmons that the GOU welcomes bilateral dialogue, but it is not interested in joining this collective group.

¶4. (C) The GOU officials were pessimistic about the situation in Afghanistan, Simmons said. They had said that the shift to terrorism and suicide bombings was a bad sign, and they believed that although NATO was winning some battles, it was "losing hearts and minds" in Afghanistan. Simmons added that the GOU was very concerned about the narcotics situation in Afghanistan. (Note: Uzbekistan has an extensive array of intelligence sources in Afghanistan, but mostly drawing on biased Uzbek sources in the north; Mirzayev himself was assigned to Mazar-i-Sharif during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. End Note.)

¶5. (C) Simmons said he thought the GOU agreed to rejoin the Planning and Review Process (PARP) in May. (Note: In May Deputy Defense Minister Niyazov made a commitment that Uzbekistan would rejoin PARP, which Uzbekistan has failed to take part in since 2004, reftel B. End Note.) Foreign Minister Norov indicated he was open to rejoining the PARP, but Defense Minister Mirzayev instead wanted an expanded number of bilateral partnership agreements. Simmons said that there were roughly 110-115 such agreements before the

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Andijon events, but this number has since shrunk to 10. NATO is aiming to increase the number to about 20.

¶6. (C) Simmons said that the GOU is interested in receiving assistance with the destruction of melange. (Note: Special machines can eliminate melange, a rocket fuel residue, by converting it into fertilizer. End Note.) NATO first must have a technical team visit, which Simmons plans to join sometime in the Spring, he said.

¶7. (C) Unlike Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan does not push NATO to cooperate with the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) or the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), Simmons opined. Uzbek officials simply state that they are members of the CSTO during their interaction with NATO officials. Simmons noted that during his last visit in December, the Uzbeks had accused the West of driving Uzbekistan toward the CSTO because of the West's reaction to the events of Andijon. Simmons said Brussels was more open to cooperation with the SCO, which is a broader organization with a broader mandate. NATO does not currently cooperate with the CSTO and he did not see this changing soon.

¶8. (C) Comment: Uzbekistan's failure to participate in NATO's 26 N collective group is not surprising given the GOU's traditional aversion to active participation in multilateral security fora and general preference for bilateral security cooperation. Uzbekistan's unwillingness to take part in collective groups such as these does not square with its previously expressed desires to hold a "leadership role" in Central Asia, including on NATO. Post continues to support NATO efforts to reengage with Uzbekistan, bearing in mind that cooperation should be a two-way street and we will need to encourage the Uzbeks to do their part.

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